

I claim:

1. A method for sorting a plurality of mail items, comprising the steps of:
  - determining destination addresses of mail items;
  - sorting said mail items into delivery point groups, each of said delivery point groups comprising a plurality of said destination addresses, said step of sorting occurring at a first sorting machine;
  - sorting into end points mail items of said delivery point groups, said mail items being sorted by a destination address delivery sequence of said mail items, whereby each of said end points is associated with at least one destination address, and said step of sorting into end points occurs at a second sorting machine;
  - conveying said mail items from said each of said end points to corresponding sections of a sectioned conveyor belt;
  - conveying said mail items to a distribution unit with said conveyor belt, said mail items arriving in an order of said sections; and
  - combining said mail items at said distribution unit in said order of said sections.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein if an end point is filled, an adjacent end point is used to accommodate mail items of a same destination address.
3. The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of combining further comprises the step of bundling said mail items.
4. The method according to claim 3, wherein said bundling is performed with a tying device.
5. The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of combining further comprises the step of wrapping said mail items.
6. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of applying

machine readable code to said mail items.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein said step of applying machine readable code occurs at said first sorter machine.
8. The method according to claim 6, wherein said step of applying occurs upstream of said first sorter machine.
9. The method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of reading said machine readable code at said second sorter machine.
10. The method according to claim 6, wherein said machine readable code comprises a bar code.
11. The method according to claim 6, wherein said machine code comprises an identifier identifying at least a number of mail items sorted into at least one group at said first sorter.
12. The method according to claim 11, wherein said identifier further relates to a destination address stored in data records of a database, said data records associated with said identifier such that a destination address of a mail item can be obtained from said database using said identifier to locate an appropriate data record.
13. The method according to claim 12, further comprising the steps of:
  - reading said machine readable code at said second sorter machine,
  - querying said database for a destination address associated with said machine readable code,
  - retrieving said destination address from said database, and
  - determining an end point for a mail item based upon said retrieved destination

address, and

- sorting said mail item to said end point.

14. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

- storing destination addresses in data records of a database,
- associating distinguishing features of mail items with said data records comprising destination addresses of said mail items, and
- wherein said step of sorting into end points further comprises the steps of:
  - determining said distinguishing features,
  - querying said database for data records matching said distinguishing features,
  - retrieving destination addresses from said data records from said database, said data records associated with said distinguishing features, and
- sorting mail items according to said retrieved destination addresses.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein said step of sorting mail items according to said retrieved destination addresses occurs at said second sorter machine.

16. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of;

- reading destination addresses of sorting machine incompatible mail items;
- transferring sorting machine incompatible mail items into sections associated with destination addresses of said incompatible mail items prior to said step of conveying said mail items to a distribution unit.

17. The method according to claim 16, wherein said step of reading destination addresses of sorting machine incompatible mail items and transferring sorting machine incompatible mail items is performed automatically.

18. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of transferring unaddressed mail items into sections associated with unaddressed mail items prior

to said step of conveying said mail items to a distribution unit.

19. The method according to claim 18, wherein said step of transferring unaddressed mail items is performed automatically.

20. An apparatus method for sorting a plurality of mail items, comprising:

- means for determining destination addresses of mail items,
- means for sorting said mail items into delivery point groups, said delivery point groups comprising a plurality of said destination addresses, said step of sorting occurring at a first sorting machine,
- means for sorting into end points mail items in said delivery point groups, said mail items being sorted by a delivery sequence of said mail items to said destination addresses, wherein each of said end points is associated with at least one destination address,
- means for conveying said mail items from said each of said end points to corresponding sections of a sectioned conveyor belt;
- means for conveying said mail items to a distribution unit, said mail items arriving in an order of said sections; and
- means for combining said mail items at said distribution unit in said order of said sections.

21. The apparatus according to claim 20, wherein said means for combining further comprises means for bundling said mail items.

22. The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said means for bundling is a tying device.

23. The apparatus according to claim 20, wherein said means for combining further comprises means for wrapping said mail items.

24. The apparatus according to claim 20, further comprising means for applying machine readable code to said mail items.
25. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein said means for applying is located at said first sorter.
26. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein means for applying is located upstream of said first sorter.
27. The apparatus according to claim 24, further comprising means for reading said machine readable code at said second sorter unit.
28. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein said machine readable code is a bar code.
29. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein said machine code comprises an identifier identifying at least a number of mail items sorted into at least one group at said first sorter.
30. The apparatus according to claim 29, wherein said identifier further relates to a destination address stored in data records of a database, said data records associated with said identifier such that a destination address of a mail item can be obtained from said database using said identifier to locate an appropriate data record.
31. The apparatus according to claim 20, further comprising:
- means for storing destination addresses in data records of a database,
  - means for associating distinguishing features of mail items with said data records containing destination addresses of said mail items, and
  - wherein said means for sorting into end points further comprises:

- means for determining said distinguishing features,
- means for querying said database for data records matching said distinguishing features,
- means for retrieving destination addresses from said data records from said database, said data records associated with said distinguishing features, and
- means for sorting mail items according to said retrieved destination addresses.

32. The apparatus according to claim 20, further comprising:

- means for reading destination addresses of sorting machine incompatible mail items; and
- means for transferring sorting machine incompatible mail items into sections associated with destination addresses of said incompatible mail items prior to said step of conveying said mail items to a distribution unit.

33. The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein said means for reading destination addresses of sorting machine incompatible mail items and transferring sorting machine incompatible mail items is performed automatically.

34. The apparatus according to claim 20, further comprising means for transferring unaddressed mail items into sections associated with unaddressed mail items prior to conveying said mail items to a distribution unit.

35. The apparatus according to claim 34, wherein said means for transferring unaddressed mail items is performed automatically.

36. The apparatus according to claim 20, further comprising:

- means for storing destination addresses in data records of a database,
- means for associating distinguishing features of mail items with said data records comprising destination addresses of said mail items, and
- wherein said means for sorting into end points further comprises:

- means for determining said distinguishing features,
- means for querying said database for data records matching said distinguishing features,
- means for retrieving destination addresses from said data records from said database, said data records associated with said distinguishing features, and
- means for sorting mail items according to said retrieved destination addresses.

37. The apparatus according to claim 36, wherein said second sorter machine comprises said means for sorting mail items according to said retrieved destination addresses.

38. An apparatus for sorting mail items, comprising:

- a destination address reader
- a first sorter for sorting said mail items according to said destination address
- a second sorter for sorting said mail items according to a destination address delivery scheme
- a conveyor for conveying mail items sorted by delivery scheme to a distribution unit.

39. The apparatus according to claim 38, wherein said second sorter comprises a plurality of end points associated with at least one destination address.

40. The apparatus according to claim 38, further comprising:

- a machine code labeler for labeling said mail items with machine readable code;
- a machine code reader for reading said code; and
- means for sorting said mail items according to said code.

41. The apparatus according to claim 40, wherein said first sorter comprises said labeler and said second sorter comprises said reader.

42. The apparatus according to claim 40, wherein said labeler is located upstream

from said first sorter.

43. The apparatus according to claim 40, further comprising a database comprising a plurality of data records including destination addresses, said destination addresses corresponding to said code.

44. The apparatus according to claim 43, wherein said second sorter further comprises:

- means for querying said database for said destination address based upon read code,
- means for retrieving a destination address from a data record, said data record associated with said code, and
- means for sorting said mail items based upon said retrieved destination address.

45. The apparatus according to claim 38, further comprising:

- means for identifying distinguishing features about said mail items,
- means for associating said features with destination addresses of said mail items,
- means for storing said features and said addresses in a database, said features being associated with said addresses in said database, and
- means for retrieving said destination address from said database based upon a query comprising said features.